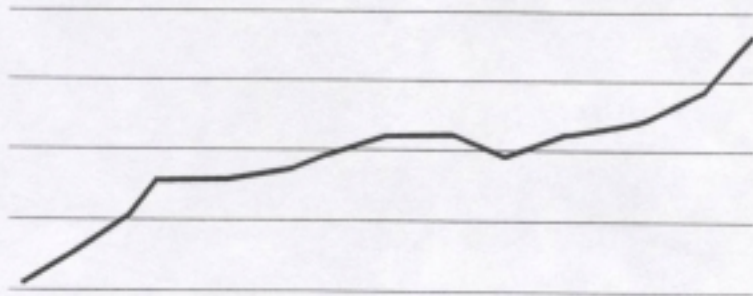


July 2001

Salt Lake County Drug Court Outcome Evaluation



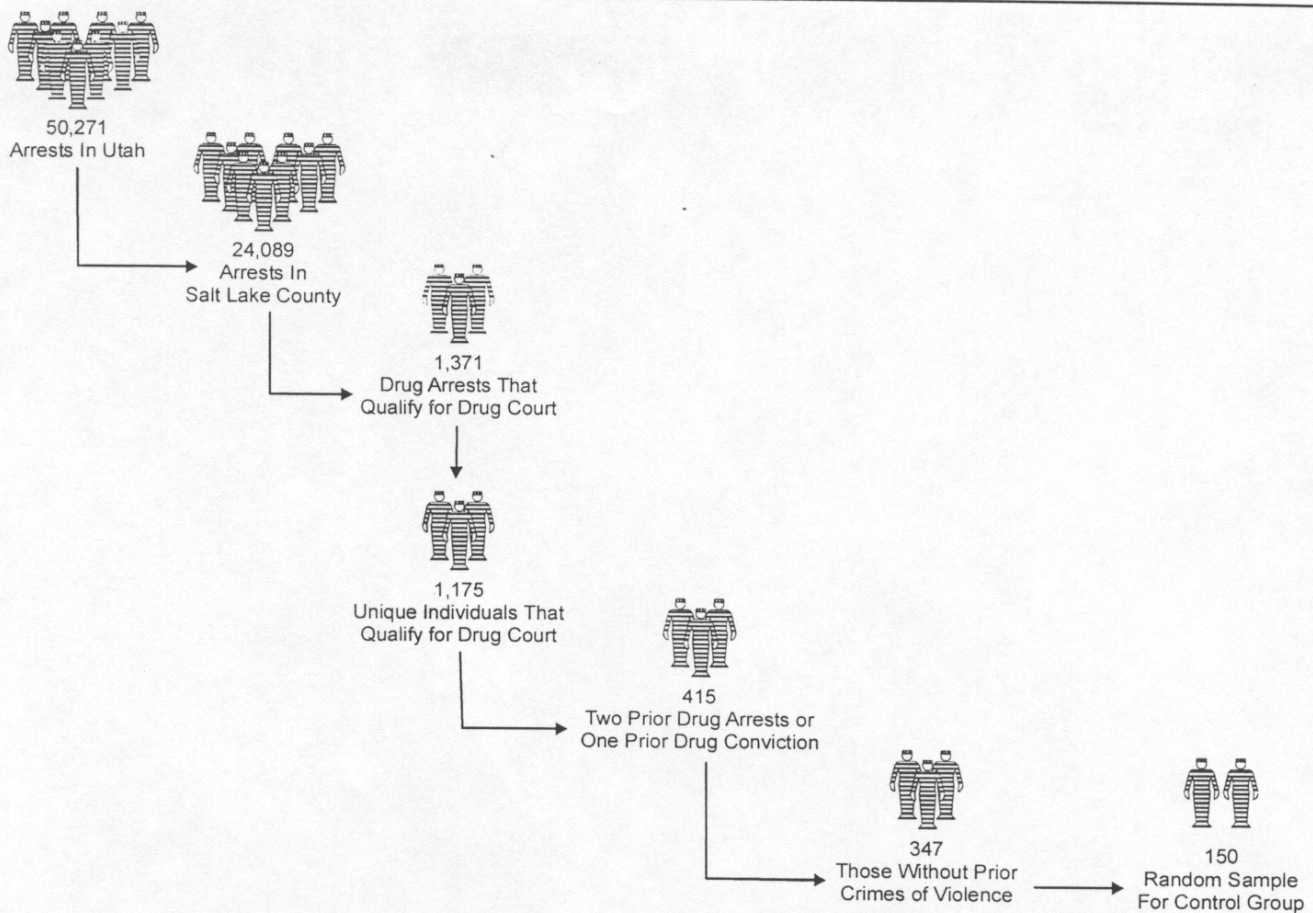
What Was Examined

The purpose of this analysis was to provide an outcome analysis of the Salt Lake County Drug Court using a matched control group. Outcome was measured based upon new arrests. Although new convictions might be a more compelling measurement than new arrests, data and timing limitations did not allow for this type of analysis at this time. The control group was selected by identifying individuals arrested in Salt Lake County during 1997 for an offense that would qualify for Drug Court. This group was further narrowed based upon eligibility requirements and program restrictions. Finally, an random sample of 150 individuals was selected as a comparison group. All Drug Court participants who had a successful termination 18 months prior to May 2001 were included as the "experimental" group. This provided the necessary 18 month window of opportunity for program graduates to recidivate.

Data Sources

A majority of the data used in this analysis came from the Utah Criminal History File. Data was extracted from the file during May 2001. Names and Offense Tracking Numbers (OTNs) for Drug Court graduates was provided by the Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse (DSA). The OTNs provided by DSA were matched to individuals on the Criminal History File. Once individuals were identified, it was possible to use the Criminal History File to search for arrest events subsequent to graduation from the Drug Court program.

Control Group Selection Process



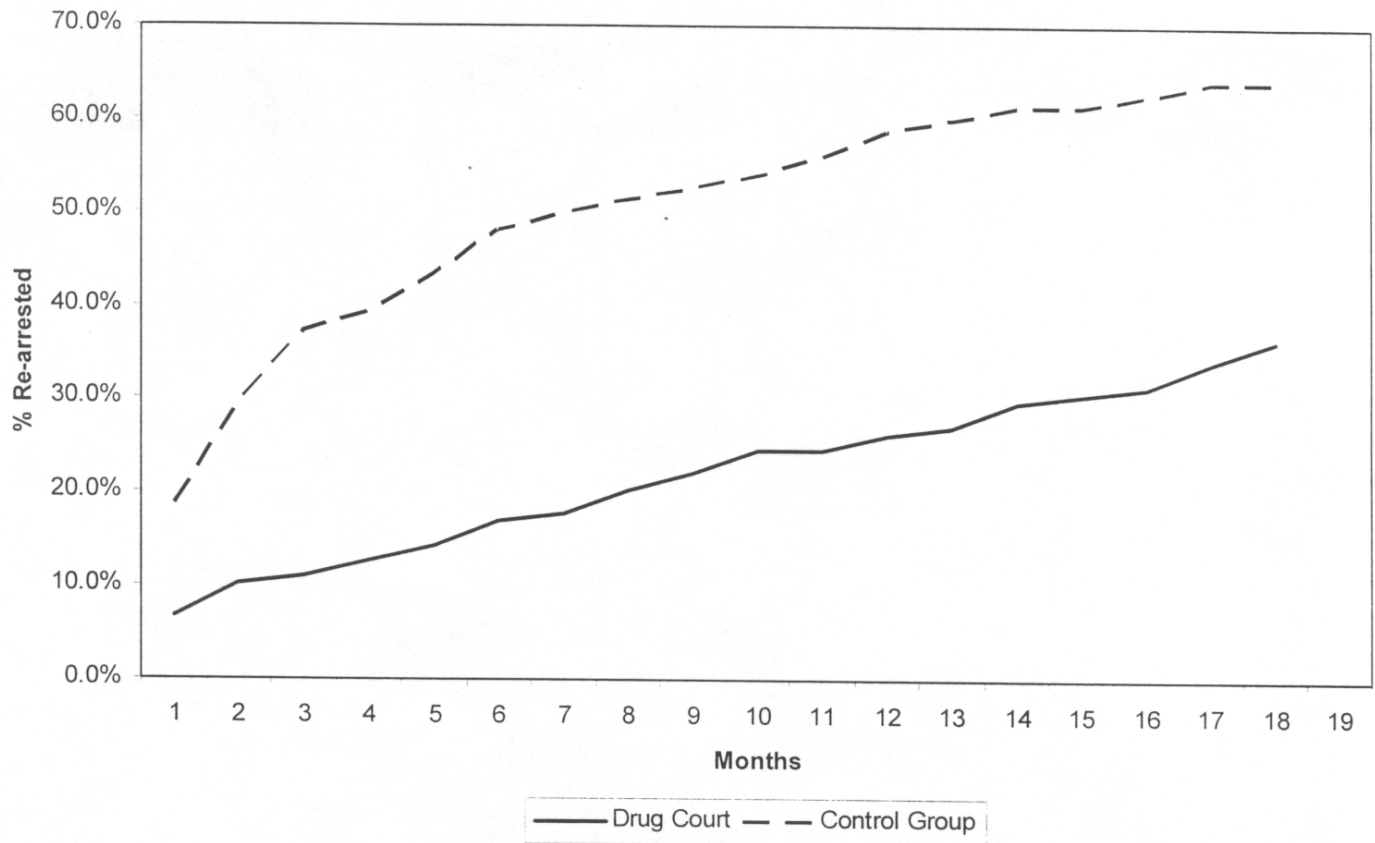
The DSA next provided a list of Drug Court participants who successfully completed the program at least 18 months prior to the May 2001 draw of data from the Criminal History File. A total of 118 graduates were found in the Criminal History File and were used as the experimental group for this analysis.

The control and experimental groups were comparable with regards to age, sex, race, and arrest history. There were no statistically significant differences when the groups were compared on these characteristics.

Finally, the Criminal History File was used to look prospectively for new arrest events for members of each group. Dates were recorded for new arrest events to assist in determining the amount of time that expired between program completion and any new arrest events. New arrests for drug offenses were also identified to determine the success of the Drug Court program in decreasing drug related offending.

Although information about new convictions would add insight into this analysis, complete information is not available. Due to the amount of time required to process a case through the court system, many of the individuals in both the control and experimental groups have yet to receive dispositions for the arrests accounted for in the Criminal History File.

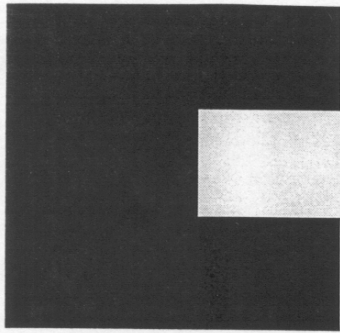
Drug Court vs. Control Group Re-Arrest Rates



The figure above looks at the re-arrest patterns of the Drug Court participants and the control group. It is clear that the control group gets out of the re-arrest starting blocks at a faster pace than the group of Drug Court graduates. At three months out, 11.0% of the Drug Court graduates had a re-arrest event, while 37.3% of the control group had a re-arrest event.

After the large initial flood of re-arrest occur, the gap between the percent of Drug Court graduates and control group participants who were re-arrested remain quite consistent. Over the remaining 15 months, about 30% more of the control group had a re-arrest event as compared to the Drug Court Group.

As time passes, it may be interesting to continue to monitor these two groups for further re-arrest events. At 18 months, the control group appears to be beginning to level out. However, the Drug Court group appears to be gradually increasing.



Conclusion

The results of this brief study indicate there is strong evidence that the Salt Lake County Drug Court is effective in reducing recidivism among its participants. A concerted effort was put forth to draw a control group that was comparable to the Drug Court participants in nearly every meaningful characteristic, including time, geography, demographics, and criminal history. The most compelling difference between the groups was whether or not they participated in the Drug Court program.

Although no effort was made to determine what, if any, programming the control group did receive, we did ensure they did not participate in the Salt Lake County Drug Court. Some may have received probation, short-term jail stays, fines, or restitution. Whatever the intervention, the results of this study indicates the Drug Court intervention was more effective in reducing recidivism with this type of offender.

Offenders who participated in the Salt Lake County Drug Court had fewer re-arrest events for all offense types and, also, fewer re-arrest events for drug related crimes. Additionally, not only did a larger proportion of the control group get re-arrested, but they also had more arrests events. The control group participants had an average of five re-arrest events compared to just two re-arrest events among Drug Court graduates.

Future Study

Several additional steps could be taken to strengthen the results of this study. First, an analysis of new convictions should be studied. However, to adequately capture the outcomes of the new arrests cited in this study, another 12 to 18 months of time will be required. Second, another 12 to 18 months of data could also show whether or not re-arrests of both the control group and Drug Court participants will level off. The re-arrest curve for Drug Court graduates was still showing an increasing trend 18 months after program completion. Additional time and data would show at what point recidivism plateaus.

Finally, a cost/benefit analysis of these results can be conducted in coming months. CCJJ, in conjunction with the Justice Research Consortium, is in the process of developing a cost/benefit analysis framework to determine whether justice programs realize a cost savings to taxpayers and victims of crime. Once finished, the outcomes from this study can be processed through the framework to determine whether the Drug Court costs outweigh the downstream victim and taxpayer costs attributed to those who recidivate.